



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM

New Mexico

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Can I be a partner?

Most of our partners are private, non-Federal, landowners. This includes individual private landowners, local and County agencies, municipalities, Tribes, Pueblos, private organizations, corporations, schools, and others. However, anyone interested in restoring and protecting wildlife habitat on private or tribal lands can get involved in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

2) Are my lands eligible for restoration under this program?

Any privately-owned land is potentially eligible for restoration. "Privately-owned" for the purposes of the Partners Program includes any land not owned by the Federal or State government. In New Mexico, however, land owned by the New Mexico State Land Office is considered privately-owned for the purposes of the Partners Program.

3) Who does the restoration?

There are three options for completing restoration:

- 1) the landowner restores the land and is reimbursed directly for some or all expenses;

- 2) the landowner hires a contractor to complete the work and the Service reimburses the landowner for payments made to the contractor; or
- 3) Service employees can assist with on-the-ground work.

4) What is the cost share rate?

Normally the cost share is 15 to 25 percent for New Mexico landowners, but the percentage is flexible. In-kind services, such as labor, equipment use, and materials, can qualify as cost share, as well as landowner funds.

5) How much funding is available for my project?

Up to \$25,000 is available for each Partners project. It is possible to receive more than the maximum for outstanding projects, as approved by the Regional Coordinator for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

6) What is a landowner agreement?

Before beginning a habitat restoration project, the Service and the landowner (Cooperator) must sign a Private Lands Agreement (PLA) that states that the landowner will not return the project area to its former use, or alter or remove any project components (e.g., pipes, fences). The length of the PLA must be 10 years at a minimum, and more than 10 years is encouraged. If the Cooperator wants to cancel the PLA, then he or she must reimburse the Service for the funds expended on the project.

The Cooperator retains all legal rights to the property. The PLA contains an Exhibit A that describes the work to be done, lists the project goals, and lists the cost estimates for the Service and the landowner.

7) When do I receive the money for the project?

Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects are reimbursable projects. Landowners are reimbursed for the costs they incur in developing an approved project, i.e., the



Rio Grande Gorge Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

landowner pays for materials, labor, and other project expenses and submits the receipts to the Service for reimbursement. The landowner may perform the restoration and be reimbursed directly for acceptable expenses; or, the landowner can hire a contractor and the Service will reimburse the landowner for expenses. The Service does not pay the contractor directly; money is deposited into an account authorized by the landowner, after the landowner submits billing receipts to the Service. Final payment is not dispersed to the landowner until the Service determines the project is complete.

8) How does the Service decide which projects are of highest priority?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service focuses on projects in ecosystems and watersheds where conservation efforts will provide the greatest benefit for Federal trust species which include: migratory birds, anadromous (migratory) fish, and threatened and endangered species, according to both Federal and State governments. The Service also gives special consideration to projects that:

- 1) are on permanently protected private lands;
- 2) are identified as high priority by State fish and wildlife agencies and other partners;
- 3) are located near National Wildlife Refuges;
- 4) reduce habitat fragmentation;
- 5) conserve or restore natural communities that the State Natural Heritage Programs or Heritage Data Bases have designated as globally or nationally imperiled;
- 6) are self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures;
- 7) help to educate the public on ecosystems and their species.

When other considerations are equal, priority may be given to projects that:

- 1) have longer duration agreements;
- 2) involve greater non-Service partnerships and/or cost-sharing;
- 3) are most cost effective;
- 4) have a substantial amount of acres.

9) Is my land suitable for habitat restoration?

Almost any land, whether it has been cropped, grazed, mined or cleared, can be restored. Bioengineering techniques can restore streams and arroyo channels that are down cutting or eroding. Some habitat will need to be protected only by fencing, against human and/or livestock impacts, to allow for natural restoration. Non-native plant species can be removed and native vegetation can be planted. A walk around the property with a Service biologist is the best way to determine a site's restoration potential.



Getting the work done. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

10) How do you restore or improve fish and wildlife habitat on my land?

Projects are designed to restore native habitat to as near a natural state as possible. Methods used in freshwater wetland restoration include creating shallow water areas where wetland plants can grow. Stream restoration may include fencing areas to protect streams and adjacent habitat, providing alternative water sources for livestock, and thus allowing natural revegetation of streamside habitat. Sometimes non-native vegetation is removed and native vegetation planted to speed restoration. For some projects, stream restoration involves the use of bioengineering techniques to stabilize the stream by creating the proper stream dimensions, pattern, and profile. Restoration of native grasslands or woodlands in upland areas may necessitate seeding, planting, and/or changing management practices. Thinning trees may be needed to restore forest health and reduce the chances of catastrophic wildfires. Removal of plants (native and non-native) that have encroached or overtaken a project can also benefit wildlife.

11) Will the Service help me build a stock pond on my property?

The Service does not provide funding for stock pond construction under the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Stock ponds generally are designed to maximize the amount of open water while minimizing the growth of cattails and other aquatic plants. Such ponds provide limited habitat for wetland wildlife. We can, however, provide technical assistance that can help improve an existing pond for wildlife use.

12) Will the Service help me build a wildlife pond on my property?

Between 1989 and 1999, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in New Mexico followed the national guidelines for the program, and wildlife ponds were designed and created in many areas of New Mexico. It has since been determined that these created ponds are not cost effective; ponds have increased maintenance needs and costs; and may not hold water. The Partners

Program will assist with technical advice and will consider funding wetland restorations that restore wetland wildlife habitat functions lost in a floodplain areas due to man-induced impacts. These projects must be cost effective and require little or no maintenance.



Wetland restoration in a floodplain. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

13) When will the work be completed?

In New Mexico, Partners projects require an archaeology survey and clearance by the State Historic Preservation Office. This clearance must be obtained and you must receive a final copy of your Private Lands Agreement (PLA), which has been signed by you, the landowner (Cooperator), and by the Service before you can begin work on the project. Landowners are required to complete the project within one year from the date of the Service's signature. The time can be extended for justifiable delays by modifying the agreement.

Note: Prior to receiving a PLA, the landowner must submit a W-9 tax form for identification purposes, and set up a means of electronic, direct deposit of funds. (The Service provides a form for this.) A waiver for an electronic deposit can be applied for under limited circumstances. The landowner must obtain all required permits, e.g., water permits from the Office of State Engineer or 404/401 Clean Water Act permits, prior to beginning work on the project.

14) What kind of maintenance is required?

Most restoration projects are designed to require little maintenance. This may include: fence repairs, water structure repairs, management of livestock and human use of the project, and control of non-native plant species. The maintenance is the responsibility of the landowner.

15) After the restoration do I have to allow public access to my land?

No. Restoring habitat with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program does not mean that you have to allow

public access on your land. Service employees occasionally need access to the project area to check on its progress and monitor its success. We will contact you to arrange these visits.

16) How do I apply to the Partners program? Is there a deadline for applications?

Contact your Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program state coordinator or visit our website (<http://ifw2es.fws.gov/NewMexico/partners.html>) for an application. Applications are accepted throughout the year. From October through February, applications are reviewed and you may be contacted to provide us with additional information or to make a site visit. Projects will be ranked and the majority of projects selected for funding in mid-March to April (depending on when program funds are available). Additional projects may be funded until the end of the fiscal year (September 30) if more funding becomes available.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

<http://ifw2es.fws.gov/NewMexico/partners.html>



Habitat for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly.
 Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service